



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Leadership practices in the Madrasah education program: A case study

Mae Ann B. Boquel \* and Marilou D. Junsay

*Institute of Advanced Studies, Davao del Norte State College, New Visayas, Panabo City, Davao del Norte, Philippines.*

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 30(02), 325-344

Publication history: Received on 23 March 2026; revised on 02 May 2026; accepted on 05 May 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.30.2.1182>

### Abstract

Leadership in the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) involves managing instruction, culture, and community needs while balancing national curriculum and Islamic values. This study was conducted in a public school implementing the MEP and used a case study approach to examine how a school head leads the program, the challenges encountered, and the coping strategies used. It is guided by the Culturally Responsive Leadership framework, which emphasizes inclusion, equity, and cultural sensitivity in school leadership. Data were gathered through interviews with key participants and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical standards such as informed consent and confidentiality were strictly observed. The findings show that the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) is shaped by interconnected leadership practices, including instructional leadership, inclusive culture, capacity development, participatory governance, and coping mechanisms. These practices highlight how school leaders and stakeholders work together through planning, monitoring, mentoring, collaboration, and shared decision-making. Despite persistent challenges such as workload, scheduling conflicts, limited resources, leaders use adaptive strategies to sustain program implementation within existing school constraints. Strengthening the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) requires improved governance coordination and planning, enhanced classroom support for culturally responsive teaching, clearer and more flexible policy guidelines on workload, time allocation, and resources, as well as future research focusing on long-term outcomes, contextual differences, and stakeholder experiences.

**Keywords:** Leadership Practices; Madrasah Education Program; Case Study

### 1. Introduction

Leadership plays a vital role in the effectiveness and sustainability of educational institutions. In the context of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP), leadership goes beyond administrative functions and includes instructional leadership, cultural responsiveness, moral guidance, and community engagement. School heads in Madrasah schools are expected to balance national education policies with Islamic values and the cultural needs of Muslim learners [1,2].

Educational leadership generally focuses on improving teaching and learning, strengthening teacher capacity, and building positive school culture [3]. In Madrasah settings, leadership becomes more complex because school heads manage both religious and secular curricula. This requires culturally responsive leadership that respects Islamic traditions while meeting national educational standards [4].

Madrasah institutions worldwide continue to provide Islamic education alongside general education subjects. Because of this dual function, leadership is essential in maintaining instructional quality, organizational effectiveness, and cultural preservation. However, studies show that Madrasah schools commonly face challenges related to leadership capacity, curriculum integration, and institutional management. Park and Niyozov [5] noted that Madrasah leaders often struggle to balance traditional Islamic education with modern educational reforms. Similarly, Ahmad [7] emphasized that many school leaders lack adequate preparation in instructional supervision and school management.

\* Corresponding author: Mae Ann B. Boquel

Research also shows that Madrasah institutions experience challenges such as weak leadership structures, limited teacher support, and insufficient resources, which affect program implementation and learning outcomes [8]. These challenges are further influenced by socio-political and cultural factors that shape leadership practices in Islamic schools [7].

In the Philippines, Madrasah education has been institutionalized through the Department of Education's Madrasah Education Program (MEP) and the Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) program. These initiatives aim to provide inclusive and culturally responsive education for Muslim learners. Despite these efforts, leadership challenges remain evident. Marasigan [4] found that Madrasah schools often experience difficulties in curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, and teacher development. Other studies also identified problems related to teacher qualifications, limited resources, and inconsistent policy implementation [10,9].

In Davao Region, the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program reflects similar concerns. School heads often handle multiple responsibilities, resulting in workload imbalance and limited instructional focus on MEP. Leadership practices also vary depending on institutional support, leadership style, and available resources [1]. While some school heads demonstrate strong stakeholder engagement and instructional leadership, others struggle because of limited administrative support and resource constraints.

Although several studies have examined Madrasah education, most focus on curriculum implementation, teacher development, and policy concerns. Limited research explores how school heads actually lead MEP implementation within real school contexts, particularly in the region. Existing literature also points to gaps in understanding leadership practices related to governance, instructional leadership, resource management, and community engagement in Madrasah schools [11].

This study addresses these gaps by examining the leadership practices of a school head implementing the Madrasah Education Program in a public school. Using a case study approach, the study provides a deeper understanding of how the school head practices culturally responsive leadership, instructional supervision, participatory governance, capacity development, and resource management within the context of public school with MEP.

The study is significant because it contributes to educational leadership literature within culturally and religiously grounded educational settings. It also provides practical insights for school heads, teachers, and policymakers in improving the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program and strengthening leadership practices. Furthermore, the study supports the goals of inclusive and equitable education aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education.

Finally, the purpose of this case study was to explore and describe the leadership practices of a school head in implementing the Madrasah Education Program. Specifically, the study examined how the school head practiced culturally responsive instructional leadership, promoted an inclusive school culture, managed resources, and addressed challenges related to MEP implementation. The study aimed to provide context-based insights that could help strengthen leadership practices and improve the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program in public school settings within the Philippine basic education system.

### **1.1. Purpose of the Study**

This case study aims to explore and analyze leadership in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) by examining how a school head exercises leadership in implementing the program. Specifically, the study seeks to describe the leadership practices of the school head, identify the challenges encountered, and examine the strategies used to address these challenges during program implementation.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

- How did the school head lead the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) ?
- What challenges did the school head encounter in leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)?
- What coping mechanisms does the school head use in leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)?

### **1.3. Theoretical Lens**

This study was anchored on the Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) framework, which views school leadership as a practice that recognizes and responds to the cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences of learners and their communities. It emphasizes inclusion, equity, and respect for diversity rather than focusing only on management and

academic performance [12]. The Madrasah Education Program (MEP), CRL highlights the role of the school head in creating an inclusive environment where learners feel respected, valued, and represented. It also stresses building strong partnerships with families and the community, as education is closely linked to cultural and religious values. The framework further emphasizes culturally responsive instruction, where school heads support teaching practices that reflect learners' cultural and religious contexts while aligning with the national curriculum. It also encourages school leaders to address challenges such as limited resources, teacher capacity gaps, scheduling issues, and curriculum integration through flexible and context-sensitive leadership.

---

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing the case study approach to explore and describe the leadership practices of a school head in implementing the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of leadership practices, experiences, and challenges within a real-life school context. The study was guided by a social constructivist perspective, which views leadership as shaped by experiences, interactions, and the cultural context of the school community. In this study, leadership in the Madrasah Education Program was understood as a dynamic process influenced by the relationships among the school head, teachers, Asatidz, learners, and stakeholders.

The case study design also enabled the researcher to examine the challenges encountered by the school head and the strategies used to address these challenges. Through this approach, the study generated detailed and context-based insights into leadership practices in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program.

### **2.2. Sampling and Participant**

This study was conducted in a public school implementing the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in the Region under the Department of Education (DepEd). The school was purposively selected because of its active implementation of the program and its relevance to the objectives of the study. The public school setting provided an appropriate context for examining the leadership practices involved in implementing the Madrasah Education Program.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who had direct involvement and relevant experience in MEP implementation. The participants included the school head, Madrasah coordinator, and Asatidz (Madrasah teachers) from the selected public school. These individuals were chosen because of their active roles in managing and implementing the program. The inclusion criteria required that the school head: (1) is currently assigned as principal, (2) has at least two years of experience in the current position, and (3) is actively implementing the Madrasah Education Program. The Madrasah coordinator and Asatidz were selected based on their direct participation in program implementation. Participants who were not directly involved in the Madrasah Education Program, lacked relevant experience, or were unable to complete the data collection process were excluded from the study.

### **2.3. Research Instrument**

This study used a researcher-made interview guide as the primary data collection instrument. The interview guide contained the main research questions and probing questions to help gather detailed responses from the participants. It also allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions when necessary. The interview guide was based on the objectives of the study and focused on the leadership practices, challenges, and coping strategies related to the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). To ensure clarity and relevance, the interview guide was reviewed and validated by experts in educational leadership and Madrasah education. Pilot testing was also conducted with individuals who were not part of the actual study to check the clarity and flow of the questions. Minor revisions were made based on their feedback. After the instrument was finalized, the researcher secured the necessary approvals and permissions from the concerned offices and school authorities before conducting the data collection process. The study was conducted following proper ethical standards and approved procedures.

### **2.4. Data Analysis Procedure**

In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data [19]. The researcher first familiarized with the data by reading and re-reading all interview transcripts and noting initial ideas. Next, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful statements related to the research questions. These codes were then organized into potential themes by grouping similar ideas together. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately reflected the data and were consistent across the dataset. Afterward, each theme was clearly defined and named based on its meaning and

relevance to the study. Finally, a narrative report was produced, presenting the themes with supporting participant quotations, along with interpretation and connection to the study's objectives, literature, and framework.

## 2.5. Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was ensured through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [20], which established rigor and integrity in the research process. Credibility was achieved through triangulation of data sources involving the principal, teacher, and coordinator, as well as member checking where participants verified the accuracy of transcripts and interpretations. Transferability was ensured through thick and detailed descriptions of the school context, participants' roles, and their experiences in implementing the Madrasah Education Program, allowing readers to assess applicability to similar settings. Dependability was maintained through the systematic use of thematic analysis [19] and an audit trail documenting all stages of data collection, coding, and theme development. Confirmability was strengthened through triangulation, verbatim transcripts, and reflexivity to reduce researcher bias and ensure that findings were grounded in participants' actual responses.

## 2.6. Ethical Consideration

This study strictly adhered to ethical principles to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained using clear and simple language, explaining the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured through anonymization of data, secure storage of files, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Ethical approvals and permissions were secured from relevant education authorities and school officials before data collection. The study posed no physical or psychological risks and focused only on professional experiences, with indirect benefits in terms of insights for policy and practice. Academic integrity was maintained through proper citation, plagiarism checking tools, and strict avoidance of fabrication or falsification of data. Potential conflicts of interest were disclosed, and the researcher ensured objectivity throughout the process. Proper acknowledgment of sources and adherence to institutional ethical guidelines were consistently observed.

---

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Leadership Practices of a School Head in Madrasah Education Program (MEP)

The findings of the study, which examines the leadership practices of Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in a public school setting shows that leadership is multidimensional and systematically implemented through four interrelated areas: culturally grounded instructional leadership, inclusive school culture, capacity development, and participatory governance. These areas collectively illustrate how leadership is enacted, experienced, and sustained across different levels of the school organization to support effective MEP implementation.

The findings reveal that Culturally Grounded Instructional Leadership highlights how the principal's leadership practices are anchored on understanding policy, contextualizing instruction, and ensuring culturally responsive implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). The principal emphasized that leadership begins with deep engagement in program guidelines, the principal stated:

*"I attended an orientation on the guidelines for the implementation of the MEP, which provided me with a deeper understanding of its processes and objectives"* (IDI-1).

This understanding is translated into structured action through planning, the principal added:

*"After the orientation, I prepared an action plan to ensure the effective rollout of MEP in our school"* (IDI-1).

Furthermore, the principal underscores the importance of continuous improvement and accountability in instruction, the principal stated:

*"With the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP), there is a need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the teaching strategies used by Asatidz"* (IDI-1), and reinforces instructional support through:

*"I provide guidance and share effective instructional strategies that can enhance their teaching practices"* (IDI-1).

These statements demonstrate that instructional leadership is both strategic and responsive, ensuring that implementation is guided, monitored, and supported.

This leadership approach is triangulated by the MEP coordinator, who confirmed that the principal actively ensures proper implementation through curriculum guidance and resource support. The coordinator stated:

*“Our principal makes sure the MEP is properly and effectively implemented in the school. She also gives us guidance on the curriculum, and helps us understand what needs to be done”* (IDI 2), highlighting the clarity of direction provided. In addition, the availability of instructional resources was emphasized through. The coordinator emphasized:

*“We are provided with teaching materials, making it easier for us to teach the learning competencies of MEP to our Muslim learners”* (IDI 2).

The coordinator further confirmed that monitoring and professional development are institutionalized, the coordinator added:

*“Classroom observations are conducted by Master Teachers”* (IDI 2). and *“Teachers are supported through seminars and trainings”* (IDI 2).

The encouragement of peer-based professional feedback is also evident in, the coordinator noted:

*“Encourages master teacher to observe lessons and provide constructive feedback”* (IDI 2).

These responses show that instructional leadership is operationalized through structured systems of support, supervision, and capacity building.

This is further affirmed by the teachers, who experience these leadership practices directly in their professional work. One teacher shared that leadership support enhances their understanding and instructional delivery; the teacher stated:

*“The principal gives me the opportunity to attend trainings and seminars conducted for MEP implementation, and these experiences really help me better understand the curriculum and improve how I implement the program in my teaching”* (IDI 3).

This confirms that leadership practices are effectively cascaded to the classroom level, allowing teachers to strengthen their competencies and improve instructional delivery.

Overall, the findings reveal that Culturally Grounded Instructional Leadership is characterized by informed policy engagement, strategic planning, continuous monitoring, and sustained instructional support. It is further strengthened through structured collaboration, provision of resources, professional development, and culturally responsive practices that ensure the effective and meaningful implementation of the MEP in the school context.

Furthermore, Inclusive School Culture reveals a deeply embedded leadership practice that promotes collaboration, unity, equity, and meaningful participation among diverse learners and stakeholders in the school community.

From the perspective of the principal, inclusive leadership is intentionally exercised through the active engagement of Muslim learners and their parents in all school programs, ensuring that they are recognized and valued within the school system. The principal stated:

*“Muslim parents and learners are actively involved in all school programs so they feel valued and represented”* (IDI-1).

Collaboration is further strengthened by fostering partnerships among teachers, parents, and learners regardless of religious background, the principal emphasized:

*“There is collaboration among teachers, parents, and learners regardless of religious background to strengthen inclusivity in the school. Every school activity, Muslim is well represented and take part in the activity”* (IDI-1).

The principal also underscores the importance of unity and respect as foundational school values, the principal stated:

*"I always emphasize unity among our learners despite religious differences, respect and understanding are part of our school culture" (IDI-1).*

Equity in participation is ensured through the provision of equal opportunities, the principal reflected:

*"In our school, all learners are given equal opportunities to participate in academic and co-curricular activities without discrimination" (IDI-1),* while broader participation is encouraged to strengthen relationships and reduce cultural barriers, the principal stated:

*"Participation of all learners in school and social activities is highly encourage to build relationships and reduce cultural barriers" (IDI-1).*

From the coordinator's perspective, these inclusive leadership intentions are effectively translated into structured school practices and collaborative implementation mechanisms. The coordinator affirmed that Muslim learners and their families are intentionally integrated into school life, the coordinator reflected:

*"The principal involves our Muslim students with their parents in school activities" (IDI 2).*

Collaboration is systematically guided across school stakeholders, the coordinator stated:

*"We are guided to promote collaboration among teachers and learners" (IDI 2).*

The coordinator further highlighted that unity is a central organizing principle in school planning, the coordinator noted:

*"Our principal clearly gives strong emphasis on unity, so we always design activities that promote harmony among different group of learners" (IDI 2).*

Inclusivity is operationalized by ensuring non-exclusion and equal access to school programs, the coordinator emphasized:

*"No learner is excluded; participation in school programs is open to all especially to Muslim learners" (IDI 2).*

Collaboration with parents is also actively sustained, the coordinator reflected:

*"We collaborate with Muslim learners and parents especially in school activities" (IDI 2).*

From the teachers' perspective, inclusive school culture is experienced as a lived practice within both classroom instruction and school-wide activities. Teacher confirmed that collaboration is consistently encouraged and practiced, the teacher expressed:

*"Our students collaborate always with other learners, the same with teachers and we make sure all learners feel included and participated during school activities" (IDI 3).*

Respect for religious diversity is also actively reinforced in instruction, the teacher added:

*"Our principal always reminds us to respect religious differences and regularly integrate these values in our lessons to promote unity among learners" (IDI 3).*

Teacher further emphasized the role in ensuring active participation of learners, the teacher stated:

*"It is important that my students participate in all school activities" (IDI 3),* while also fostering social interaction and relationship-building among learners, the teacher added:

*"In our school, we encourage interaction among learners to build friendships and inclusivity" (IDI 3).*

Overall, the triangulated findings demonstrate that Inclusive School Culture is not merely a guiding principle but a consistently enacted practice across leadership, coordination, and classroom levels. The alignment of perspectives

reveals a coherent system where collaboration, unity, equity, and participation are intentionally cultivated, ensuring that diversity is respected and that all learners are meaningfully included in the educational process.

Moreover, collaborative instructional capacity development is primarily anchored on the provision of continuous mentoring and coaching practices by school leadership to strengthen instructional delivery and pedagogical competence. The principal emphasized that professional growth is intentionally supported through structured leadership interventions aimed at improving both teaching effectiveness and cultural responsiveness of Asatidz. The principal (IDI-1) stated:

*"As you can see, I provide mentoring and coaching practices to support teachers and Asatidz in improving their instructional delivery."* (IDI-1)

In addition, the principal highlighted the importance of sustained capacity-building initiatives designed to enhance teaching competencies, the principal stated:

*"In every school year, I implement capacity-building activities for teachers to strengthen their teaching competencies."* (IDI-1)

The principal also emphasized the role of structured professional collaboration through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, the principal added:

*"I regularly conduct Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions to enhance teachers' instructional practices and collaboration."* (IDI-1)

These statements reflect that instructional leadership is actively exercised through mentoring, training, and structured collaborative platforms that support continuous professional development.

In triangulation, the coordinator confirmed that the principal's leadership plays a central role in strengthening instructional capacity through organized support systems such as mentoring, training programs, and collaborative professional learning activities. The coordinator emphasized that these initiatives are consistently implemented to improve instructional quality and classroom effectiveness among Asatidz. The coordinator (IDI2) stated:

*"Mentoring and coaching activities are practiced in our school and we have Master Teachers that helps us- teachers and Asatidz improve our instructional delivery and classroom practices."* (IDI2).

The coordinator further highlighted that LAC sessions serve as a structured avenue for shared learning and instructional enhancement. She added:

*"We have Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and Asatidz participates in our LAC session."* (IDI2)

Moreover, the Coordinator emphasized the sustained focus on professional growth and classroom management improvement. She stated:

*"Our principal schedules and conducts capacity-building activities and our Asatidz/ ALIVE teachers participates in the activity."* (IDI2)

These responses indicate that instructional capacity development is systematically reinforced through institutionalized professional development mechanisms.

From the perspective of the Asatidz/teachers, collaborative instructional capacity development is experienced through direct participation in mentoring, training, and professional collaboration activities that strengthen their instructional effectiveness. The Asatidz emphasized that leadership support plays a crucial role in improving their teaching practices and understanding of learners' needs. The Teacher (IDI3) stated:

*"Yes, we have mentoring and coaching. And it helps us improve our teaching strategies and instructional delivery inside the classroom."* (IDI3)

The teacher further highlighted their engagement in structured capacity-building programs. The teacher added:

*"There are regular capacity-building activities, which help me strengthen my teaching skills and understanding of learners' needs." (IDI3)*

Additionally, the teacher emphasized the importance of collaborative reflection and shared learning through LAC sessions, the teacher emphasized:

*"We take part in Learning Action Cell (LAC) together with fellow teachers in sessions that allow us to share experiences and improve our instructional practices collaboratively." (IDI3)*

These statements demonstrate that teachers experience instructional development as an ongoing, supported, and collaborative process rather than an isolated professional activity.

The findings underscore that collaborative instructional capacity development is a shared institutional practice that strengthens teacher effectiveness through continuous mentoring, structured training, and sustained professional collaboration. The convergence of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that instructional improvement is systematically sustained through leadership support, peer collaboration, and professional learning structures. Ultimately, this collaborative framework enhances pedagogical competence, classroom management, and instructional responsiveness, contributing to improved quality of instruction in the school setting.

Moreover, the findings indicate that participatory governance is primarily anchored on the principal's practice of knowledge cascading, shared leadership, and inclusive decision-making processes that engage teachers and Asatidz in school governance. The principal emphasized the importance of ensuring that all stakeholders are well-informed and actively involved in school initiatives. The principal (IDI-1) stated:

*"During our regular meeting, important information and program updates are disseminated and school activities are clearly communicated." (IDI-1)*

The principal further emphasized the practice of shared leadership in decision-making, the principal emphasized:

*"I never neglect the involvement of teachers in decision-making processes. I always ask the teacher about their needs and make follow ups every now and then." (IDI-1)*

In addition, the principal underscored the establishment of participatory structures to strengthen engagement. The principal stated:

*"I plan for school activities together with teachers, we have different committees assigned and there is an active participation of stakeholders in school programs." (IDI-1)*

In triangulation, the coordinator confirmed that participatory governance is operationalized through systematic communication, collaborative planning, and inclusive leadership practices initiated by the principal. The coordinator emphasized that stakeholders are consistently informed and engaged in school processes to ensure clarity and alignment of roles. The coordinator (IDI2) stated:

*"Yes, our principal updates us always about the information's and programs is effectively communicated to teachers and stakeholders." (IDI2)*

The coordinator further emphasized stakeholder involvement in decision-making, the coordinator stated: *"Teachers are actively involved in planning and decision-making processes through regular meetings and consultations." (IDI2)*

From the perspective of the teachers, participatory governance is experienced through active involvement in planning, decision-making, and implementation of school programs. The Asatidz emphasized that they are consistently informed and given opportunities to contribute meaningfully to school processes. The Teacher (IDI3) stated:

*"We are informed about school programs and are encouraged to participate in discussions and decision-making during meetings." (IDI3)*

They further highlighted the value of being given a voice in school governance. The teacher added:



*"We have opportunities to share our ideas and feedback specially in Learning Action Plan Sessions (LAC). We feel valued and understood."* (IDI3)

Accountability was also emphasized through assigned responsibilities. The teacher stated:

*"Our principal gives us freedom on how to teach the lesson. This helps us develop accountability in implementing school programs."* (IDI3)

Open communication with leadership was also highlighted. The teacher noted:

*"Open communication with the principal allows us to express our concerns and contribute to improving the program."* (IDI3)

These statements demonstrate that participatory governance is experienced as an empowering process that enhances engagement, responsibility, and commitment among teachers.

The findings underscore that participatory governance in the school is sustained through inclusive leadership, transparent communication, and structured stakeholder engagement mechanisms. The convergence of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that shared decision-making, delegation of responsibilities, and active participation in planning processes foster a strong sense of accountability, ownership, and empowerment. Ultimately, this collaborative governance structure strengthens program implementation and promotes a more inclusive, responsive, and effective school environment for the Madrasah Education Program (MEP).

Overall, the findings underscore that leadership in Case 1 is multidimensional and coherently enacted through culturally grounded instructional leadership, inclusive school culture, collaborative instructional capacity development, and participatory governance. Collectively, these interconnected leadership practices ensure the effective, responsive, and coherent implementation of the Madrasah Education Program within the school setting.

### **3.2. Challenges that the School Head Encountered in Leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)**

The findings reveal that the challenges encountered by the school principal in leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP), are multifaceted and interconnected, primarily manifested through implementation constraints, educational leadership limitations and resource constraints that collectively affect program delivery and instructional effectiveness.

The findings show that implementation constraints are characterized by persistent scheduling conflicts between MEP and regular subjects, difficulties in curriculum integration, the need to extend instructional time, increased teacher workload, and limited time allocation for program delivery. These constraints directly affect instructional planning and classroom implementation, as teachers are required to balance multiple responsibilities within a limited instructional schedule. The overlap of program requirements often results in time pressure, reduced instructional focus, and increased workload, thereby affecting the overall quality and effectiveness of MEP delivery. These constraints reflect structural and operational challenges that influence both instructional planning and classroom implementation. The convergence of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these challenges are systemic and consistently experienced across different levels of program implementation.

Scheduling conflicts and the difficulty of integrating MEP within an already congested curriculum remain persistent structural challenges that affect both instructional planning and program implementation. The principal emphasized that balancing instructional time between MEP and regular subjects remains a major challenge due to overlapping requirements and limited flexibility in scheduling. The principal (P-IS) stated:

*"I encounter persistent schedule conflicts between MEP and regular subjects, which makes it difficult to balance instructional time effectively."* (IDI-1)

Additionally, the Principal emphasized the increased workload experienced by teachers, the principal stated:

*"Despite the effort to provide more teachers, I still observe increased teacher workload due to the demands of handling both the regular curriculum and MEP requirements."* (IDI-1)

Limited time allocation was also identified as a key constraint affecting program effectiveness, the principal added:

*"I face challenges with scheduling and limited time allocation, which affects the effective delivery and implementation of the MEP."* (IDI-1)

These statements indicate that time-related constraints significantly affect both instructional delivery and program management.

In triangulation, the coordinator confirmed that scheduling and curriculum-related challenges significantly influence the implementation of the MEP. The coordinator emphasized that conflicts between MEP and regular class schedules disrupt effective time management and program organization. The coordinator (IDI2) stated:

*"Unfortunately, school experiences persistent schedule conflicts between MEP and regular subjects, making it challenging to manage time effectively."* (IDI2)

Moreover, the Coordinator confirmed the increased workload among teachers, the coordinator noted:

*"Teachers experience increased workload as they manage both regular curriculum demands and MEP."* (IDI2)

These responses demonstrate that implementation constraints are consistently observed at the coordination and management level.

From the perspective of the Asatidz, implementation constraints are experienced directly in classroom practice, particularly in managing time, balancing instructional demands, and addressing workload pressures. The Teacher (IDI3) stated:

*"We experience schedule conflicts between MEP and regular classes."* (IDI3)

In addition, the Asatidz emphasized the impact of increased workload, the teacher added:

*"We experience increased workload because we are to handle both the regular curriculum and MEP responsibilities."* (IDI3)

These statements show that implementation constraints directly influence instructional delivery, teacher performance, and learner engagement at the classroom level.

The findings underscore that implementation constraints in the school are largely driven by time-related and structural challenges affecting scheduling, curriculum integration, and teacher workload. The alignment of perspectives from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these constraints are systemic and require strategic interventions. Addressing these challenges necessitates improved scheduling mechanisms, better curriculum alignment, effective workload management, and sufficient time allocation to ensure that the MEP is implemented efficiently without compromising the quality of instruction in other subject areas.

Capacity Development Gaps in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) are primarily characterized by the need for continuous professional development and mentoring, limited support in applying varied teaching strategies, challenges in integrating culturally relevant professional development, and gaps in leadership capacity related to Madrasah curriculum content. These constraints highlight both instructional and leadership limitations that affect the overall effectiveness of program implementation. The convergence of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these gaps are systemic and consistently experienced across different levels of practice.

The findings indicate that capacity development gaps are primarily anchored on the need for sustained professional development and mentoring to strengthen instructional competencies among teachers and Asatidz. The principal emphasized that continuous learning opportunities are essential to improve teaching effectiveness and responsiveness to diverse learner needs. The principal stated:

*"There is a need for continuous professional development and mentoring to further strengthen the instructional competencies of teachers."* (IDI-1)

In triangulation, the coordinator affirmed that similar capacity-related challenges persist within the school, particularly in the areas of professional development, instructional strategy support, and leadership content knowledge. The

coordinator emphasized the ongoing need for structured mentoring and training programs to enhance instructional competencies. The coordinator (IDI2) stated:

*"Personally, I could say, there is a continuous need for professional development and mentoring to strengthen the instructional competencies of teachers."* (IDI2)

These responses demonstrate that capacity development gaps are consistently observed at the coordination and implementation levels.

From the perspective of the teacher, these gaps are experienced through the need for continuous learning opportunities and improved instructional support. The teacher emphasized the importance of sustained professional development to enhance their teaching competencies and classroom practices. The Teacher (IDI3) stated:

*"Continuous professional development and mentoring from Master Teacher to further improve my teaching competencies."* (IDI3)

These statements indicate that teachers directly experience the effects of limited professional development opportunities and leadership capacity gaps in their instructional practices.

The findings underscore that capacity development gaps in the school are both teacher- and leadership-related, particularly in the areas of professional development, instructional strategy support, and knowledge of the Madrasah curriculum. The alignment of perspectives from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these challenges are systemic and require targeted interventions. Addressing these gaps through sustained professional development programs, integration of culturally responsive training, and strengthening of leadership capacity is essential to enhance instructional effectiveness and ensure the successful implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP).

Moreover, educational leadership limitation in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in the school is primarily evident during the initial program implementation. These limitations include difficulty in managing program demands, challenges in delegating tasks, limited leadership preparation, and the need to build trust within a culturally and professionally diverse school environment. These constraints reflect both leadership capacity issues and the complexity of managing diversity within the school context. The convergence of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these challenges are systemic and experienced across different levels of implementation.

The findings indicate that educational leadership limitations are primarily anchored on the challenges encountered by the principal during the early phase of MEP implementation, particularly in managing program demands and coordinating responsibilities. The principal emphasized that the initial implementation stage required significant adjustment in leadership practices. The principal (P-IS) stated:

*"When I was first introduced to MEP, I experienced difficulty managing the program demands."* (IDI-1)

These statements indicate that leadership challenges are closely linked to both the demands of program implementation and the dynamics of a diverse school environment.

In triangulation, the coordinator affirmed that leadership-related challenges significantly influenced the implementation of the MEP, particularly during its initial stage. The coordinator emphasized that managing program demands required continuous adjustment and adaptation from school leadership. The coordinator (IDI2) stated:

*"Yes, we experienced difficulty in implementing the program, everything was new to us before the implementation"* (IDI2)

These responses demonstrate that leadership limitations are consistently observed at the coordination and implementation levels.

The findings underscore that educational leadership limitations in the school are largely associated with the complexities of managing program implementation within a diverse and evolving school context, particularly during the initial stages. The alignment of perspectives from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that these challenges are systemic and require targeted leadership development. Addressing these limitations necessitates strengthening leadership preparation, enhancing competencies in delegation and collaboration, and fostering trust and

shared understanding among stakeholders. Such efforts are essential to ensure effective program implementation and the sustainability of leadership practices in the context of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP).

Furthermore, the findings under the theme of Resource Constraints reveal that the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) is significantly shaped by persistent limitations in funding, instructional materials, institutional prioritization, and capacity-building opportunities, all of which collectively affect the quality and sustainability of program delivery.

To triangulate this, the coordinator, confirms that these constraints are similarly experienced at the implementation level, where program delivery often relies on adaptive strategies due to limited resources and support systems. The coordinator stated:

*"We need more capacity-building trainings, especially for teachers"* (IDI 2), From the teachers' perspective, resource constraints are most acutely experienced at the classroom level, where they directly affect instructional delivery and learner engagement.

In addition, limited professional development opportunities constrain teacher growth, the teacher reflected:

*"We need more opportunities for training and capacity-building, which affects our teaching development"* (IDI 3).

Overall, the triangulated findings demonstrate that resource constraints remain a persistent and systemic challenge in the implementation of the MEP. The convergence of perspectives from the principal, coordinator, and teachers underscores those limitations in funding, instructional materials, institutional prioritization, and capacity-building opportunities significantly affect program effectiveness. While adaptive strategies such as integration with other school programs are employed, the findings highlight the critical need for strengthened systemic support and sustained investment to ensure the effective, equitable, and high-quality implementation of the Madrasah Education Program.

### **3.3. Coping Mechanisms that the School Head Use in Leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP)**

The findings reveal that school leaders adopt a combination of Instructional Adaptation, Professional Capacity Building, Distributed leadership and Resource Mobilization to address the challenges encountered in leading the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) within an school setting. These approaches reflect a balance between instructional leadership and practical problem-solving, particularly in contexts marked by limited resources, diverse teacher capacities, and increased workload demands.

A strong and coherent pattern of instructional adaptation within the school, showing how leadership direction, coordinated support systems, and teachers' lived classroom experiences collectively sustain the effective implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). Across all levels, there is a consistent emphasis on strengthening lesson delivery, improving instructional competence, and ensuring that teaching practices remain responsive to learner needs.

The principal's instructional adaptation is anchored on continuous improvement of teaching quality and the professional development of teachers. The principal stated:

*"I am very particular on improving lesson delivery and strengthening the instructional competencies of teachers and Asatidz to ensure effective learning"* (IDI-1).

To operationalize this, the principal ensures systematic instructional supervision through classroom observation and feedback mechanisms, the principal added:

*"In my leadership, I conduct regular classroom observations and provide feedback to guide teachers in improving their instructional practices through the Master Teachers"* (IDI-1).

This monitoring function is reinforced by a structured evaluation system, the principal expressed:

*"I ensure that proper monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to assess the effectiveness of teaching and program implementation"* (IDI-1)

Instructional improvement is further supported through pedagogical coaching and learner engagement strategies during LAC sessions, the principal added:

*"It is important to guide teachers in applying appropriate pedagogical strategies and in motivating learners to actively participate in the learning process through quarterly Learning Action Plan (LAC) sessions"* (IDI-1).

In addition, alignment and coherence are ensured through strategic planning, the principal added:

*"Strategic planning to ensure that the MEP is properly integrated and effectively carried out in the school"* (IDI-1)

while policy understanding is strengthened through structured orientations, the principal added:

*"I promote policy literacy by conducting orientations to ensure that teachers clearly understand program guidelines and expectations"* (IDI-1).

In triangulation, the coordinator affirmed that these leadership strategies are translated into coordinated school-level practices that support instructional improvement and teacher development. The coordinator stated:

*"There are collaborative efforts to strengthen lesson delivery and improve the competencies of teachers and Asatidz through mentoring and support from the Master Teacher"* (IDI 2) highlighting a system of shared instructional support. Monitoring and feedback are embedded in regular classroom observation processes, the coordinator reflected:

*"We have classroom observation and post conference from the master Teacher for feed backing to enhancing instructional performance"* (IDI 2), and *"The principal regularly monitors and check the classes."* (IDI 2) indicating sustained instructional oversight. Professional learning is strengthened through LAC sessions, the coordinator stated:

*"Yes, Teachers are supported in applying effective teaching strategies through LAC sessions"* (IDI 2) while policy clarity is ensured through structured communication, the coordinator noted:

*"Orientations and briefings are conducted to ensure teachers understand MEP policies and procedures"* (IDI 2)

These processes demonstrate that instructional adaptation is institutionalized through continuous collaboration and structured support systems.

The teachers also confirmed that instructional adaptation is experienced as an ongoing process of guidance, reflection, and professional growth directly linked to classroom practice. Teachers emphasized that mentoring from Master Teachers plays a crucial role in improving instruction, the teacher reflected:

*"We are guided by the Master Teacher in improving our lesson delivery and teaching strategies to better teach the MEP learners"* (IDI 3)

Classroom observation and feedback are viewed as essential tools for instructional refinement, the teacher added:

*"Classroom observations and feedback that help us improve how we deliver lessons"* (IDI 3) complemented by reflective post-conference discussions, the teacher added:

Teachers also highlighted the importance of instructional guidance in enhancing learner engagement, the teacher stated:

*"We are guided by Master Teachers on how to better motivate learners and apply effective teaching strategies in class"* (IDI 3)

Furthermore, planning activities provide clarity and structure in instruction, the teacher stated:

*"Planning activities help us understand how to properly integrate MEP into our teaching"* (IDI 3)

while orientations strengthen understanding of program expectations, the teacher added:

*"Yes, we attend orientations and it help us understand the guidelines and expectations of the MEP"* (IDI 3).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that instructional adaptation in the school is a systematic and collaborative process characterized by leadership-driven instructional improvement, structured monitoring and evaluation, sustained professional development, and active teacher engagement. The convergence of these practices ensures that instruction is continuously refined, contextually responsive, and effectively aligned with the goals of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP), ultimately strengthening teaching quality and learner engagement across the school.

Furthermore, Professional Capacity Building reveal a strong and continuous system of professional development that supports both instructional leadership and teaching practices in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). Across all levels, capacity building is consistently viewed as a key driver for improving program understanding, instructional quality, and leadership effectiveness.

The principal's professional capacity building begins with foundational learning and continuous engagement in training opportunities that strengthen program implementation. The principal stated:

*"I gained a clearer understanding of the MEP when I attended the orientation, which helped me guide the program better in our school"* (IDI-1) showing how orientation serves as a starting point for informed leadership. The principal further emphasized overcoming implementation challenges through continuous learning, the principal stated:

*"It was not a quick process but I was able to overcome early challenges in implementing the program through continuous training and guidance from supervisors"* (IDI-1).

Ongoing professional development is reinforced through participation in Division Office trainings, the principal stated:

*"I regularly participate in trainings, which help me strengthen my leadership and program implementation skills"* (IDI-1) and through content-specific preparation, the principal stated:

*"As a school head, I was also trained in basic Arabic and Madrasah Education content to better support the implementation of the MEP"* (IDI-1).

Capacity building is also extended to teachers and Asatidz through equitable access, the principal added:

*"I ensure that all teachers and Asatidz are given equal opportunities to attend professional development activities"* (IDI-1).

Collaborative learning is sustained through LAC sessions, the principal added:

*"We sustain learning through collaborative training sessions—Learning Action Cell (LAC) where teachers can share practices and learn from one another"* (IDI-1), while instructional support is reinforced through mentoring, the principal noted:

*"I provide instructional support through mentoring from my Master Teachers especially for teachers who need guidance in delivering lessons"* (IDI-1).

When necessary, external expertise is also sought, *"When needed, I also seek external support from our supervisor for professional guidance to improve how we implement the program"* (IDI-1).

This is triangulated by the coordinator who emphasized that professional capacity building is strongly supported through structured institutional training systems that enhance the competencies of both leaders and teachers. The coordinator stated:

*"DepEd orientations provided clear guidance, that helps our principal and teachers understand the implementation of the MEP"* (IDI 2).

The coordinator further emphasized the role of Division Office trainings, the coordinator stated:

*"Trainings are conducted, in that way we are able to improve our competencies as teachers"* (IDI 2), and

*"Teachers and school heads undergo training about the MEP and teaching strategies"* (IDI 2).

Collaborative professional development is also highlighted through LAC sessions, the coordinator noted:

*"Yes, we have training activities like LAC that encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers."* (IDI 2), indicating that learning is both structured and participatory.

The teacher affirmed that the principal's professional capacity building is evident and experienced as a continuous process of learning, collaboration, and instructional improvement. Teachers emphasized that orientation activities provide foundational understanding of the program, the teacher stated:

*"We were oriented about the program, which helped us understand how to properly implement MEP in our classes"* (IDI 3).

Training and guidance are seen as essential for addressing classroom challenges and improving instruction, the teacher added:

*"We receive training and it helps us improve our teaching and address challenges in the classroom"* (IDI 3)

Capacity building also strengthens instructional competence, the teacher stated:

*"Training helps us improve our teaching strategies and better understand the learning competencies we are teaching"* (IDI 3)

while also providing opportunities for professional growth, the teacher noted:

*"We are given opportunities to attend trainings and seminars for our professional growth"* (IDI 3).

Instructional support is reinforced through mentoring, The teacher stated:

*"We are guided and mentored to improve how we deliver our lessons"* (IDI 3).

Overall, the findings underscore that professional capacity building in the school is a continuous, inclusive, and collaborative process supported by orientation programs, institutional training, mentoring systems, and external expertise. The alignment of responses from the Principal, Coordinator, and Asatidz indicates that capacity development is consistently experienced across all levels and serves as a critical mechanism for strengthening instructional quality and ensuring effective implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP).

Furthermore, Distributed Leadership reveal a well-established culture of shared responsibility, participatory decision-making, collaboration, trust-building, and empowerment among the principal, coordinator, teachers, and Asatidz in the school setting. Leadership is not concentrated in a single role but is intentionally dispersed to strengthen engagement and collective ownership of school processes.

From the perspective of the principal, distributed leadership is deliberately fostered through open dialogue and inclusive decision-making structures that ensure meaningful participation of teachers and Asatidz in school governance. The principal stated:

*"I promote open dialogue and participatory decision-making so that teachers and Asatidz are actively involved in school decisions and feel their voices matter"* (IDI-1).

The principal further emphasized trust-building as a core leadership practice, the principal added:

*"My teachers can always have a dialogue with me with whatever they need or problem they have and, in that way, I was able to build trust with them. Also, teachers can freely express their thoughts and concerns"* (IDI-1).

Collaboration across groups is strengthened through teamwork and shared accountability, the principal expressed:

*"I work to strengthen collaboration across different groups in the school by encouraging teamwork and shared responsibility"* (IDI-1).

Conflict resolution is handled through respectful communication and consensus-building, the principal added:

*"I address conflicts through open communication, making sure issues are resolved respectfully and collaboratively"* (IDI-1).

Moreover, leadership responsibilities are intentionally distributed to empower staff participation in school functions and decision-making, the principal stated:

*"Empowering teachers by distributing leadership roles and allowing them to take part in important school functions and decisions" (IDI-1).*

This leadership approach is triangulated by the coordinator, who affirmed that participatory structures are actively operationalized within the school to ensure engagement, collaboration, and shared accountability. The coordinator stated:

*"Teachers are given opportunities to participate in discussions and contribute to school decisions through open communication channels" (IDI 2).*

The coordinator further highlighted the principal's consistent efforts in strengthening relational trust and school connectedness, the coordinator added:

*"Our principal will constantly make effort to follow up on us and ask about our situations. This way, we were able to build trust and have good relationship with fellow teachers and the school community" (IDI 2).*

Collaboration is also embedded in planning and implementation processes, the coordinator noted:

*"Teachers work together in planning and implementing school activities" (IDI 2)*

In handling conflicts, the coordinator emphasized dialogical resolution practices, the coordinator stated:

*"Conflicts are managed through dialogue and mutual understanding among teachers and we have grievance committee" (IDI 2)* while shared leadership is reinforced through delegated responsibilities, the coordinator stated:

*"Teachers are given responsibilities that allow them to actively contribute to program activities and implementation" (IDI 2).*

The teacher confirmed that distributed leadership is experienced as an empowering and inclusive system that enhances participation, strengthens collaboration, and builds a strong sense of trust and belonging within the school. Teacher emphasized active role in decision-making processes, the teacher reflected:

*"We are involved in discussions and encouraged to share our opinions before decisions are made in the school" (IDI 3)*

Open communication was highlighted as a key factor in fostering inclusion and trust, the teacher stated:

*"We feel more comfortable and valued because there is constant open communication with our principal" (IDI 3)*

Collaboration is evident across programs and tasks, the teacher added:

*"We collaborate with colleagues from different programs to accomplish school tasks and activities" (IDI 3).*

Overall, the triangulated findings demonstrate that distributed leadership is deeply embedded in the school's organizational culture, characterized by shared decision-making, collaborative engagement, trust-based relationships, and empowered participation. The alignment of perspectives from the principal, coordinator, and teachers indicates that leadership is collectively enacted rather than individually centered, fostering a cohesive, inclusive, and responsive environment that strengthens the implementation of school programs, including the Madrasah Education Program (MEP).

Resource Generation reveal a sustained and collaborative effort among the principal, coordinator, and teachers to address resource limitations in the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). Resource generation emerges as a strategic and adaptive practice that combines stakeholder engagement, partnership building, instructional improvisation, and efficient resource utilization to ensure program continuity and effectiveness.

The principal emphasized that resource generation is anchored on proactive leadership in mobilizing internal and external support systems to meet the needs of the program. The principal stated:



*"I mobilize community and stakeholder support to help address the needs of the Madrasah Education Program" (IDI-1).*

The principal further emphasized strengthening human resources through advocacy, the principal added:

*The best asset of school is the teacher, that is why I advocate for additional teacher support to ensure that program implementation is effectively managed" (IDI-1).*

In response to instructional limitations, the principal encourages innovation at the classroom level, the principal noted:

*"I encouraged my teachers to improvised local instructional materials to support effective teaching" (IDI-1).*

External partnerships are also intentionally developed to expand resource support, the principal stated:

*"It is important to establish external partnerships to gain additional support for program implementation" (IDI-1)*

Resource management is further guided by prioritization strategies, the principal added:

*"I apply strategic prioritization of resources to ensure effective program implementation" (IDI-1),*

This is triangulated by the coordinator, who confirmed that resource generation is actively operationalized through continuous stakeholder engagement, institutional coordination, and adaptive strategies within the school. The coordinator stated:

*"The school actively engages community members and stakeholders to support the needs of the MEP" (IDI 2).*

External linkages are likewise strengthened, the coordinator added:

*" School builds partnerships with external stakeholders to support resource needs" (IDI 2)*

Support from external stakeholders, particularly parents and community groups, further enhances resource availability, the teacher emphasized:

*"Partnerships with PTA help provide additional resources for our teaching and school activities" (IDI 3).*

Overall, the triangulated findings demonstrate that resource generation in the MEP is a dynamic and strategically managed process grounded in collaboration, innovation, and shared responsibility. The convergence of perspectives from the principal, coordinator, and teachers highlights a unified effort to mobilize stakeholders, strengthen partnerships, optimize limited resources, and adapt instructional practices. This coordinated approach ensures that despite resource constraints, the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program remains responsive, functional, and sustainable.

---

#### **4. Discussion**

This study shows that the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) is shaped by persistent structural and operational challenges. The findings reveal that implementation constraints, capacity development gaps, and educational leadership limitations are interrelated and commonly experienced. These reflect systemic issues such as heavy workload, scheduling conflicts and difficulties integrating MEP into existing school structures. Despite committed leadership, implementation is still constrained by institutional conditions that limit full program realization.

Implementation constraints are mainly linked to scheduling conflicts, curriculum congestion, workload pressures, and limited instructional time. These conditions create tension between MEP and regular academic requirements, affecting instructional delivery and program consistency.

Findings show that fragmented scheduling and overlapping responsibilities reduce instructional efficiency and continuity of learning. This aligns with studies emphasizing that time allocation and scheduling remain major barriers in implementing additional or integrated programs in schools [8,11]. When instructional time is divided, teaching quality and learning outcomes are negatively affected.

Curriculum congestion and workload pressures further intensify these challenges. Teachers handling both regular subjects and MEP experience increased workload, which affects performance and well-being. This is supported by OECD [14], which highlights that excessive workload reduces teacher effectiveness, and Darling-Hammond et al. [18], who stress the need for alignment between curriculum demands and teacher capacity.

The findings also highlight the need for continuous professional development to support teachers in managing instructional demands. This is consistent with Opfer and Pedder [19], who emphasize that sustained, context-based professional learning is essential for effective teaching in complex environments.

From a systems perspective, integrating MEP into existing school structures reveals misalignment in scheduling, resources, and processes. As Spillane et al. [13] note, implementation challenges often occur when new programs are introduced without structural adjustments. This suggests that effective implementation requires both strong leadership and institutional flexibility.

From a Culturally Responsive Leadership (CRL) perspective, these constraints highlight the gap between inclusive education goals and structural limitations. While CRL emphasizes alignment of school systems with learners' cultural needs [12], rigid structures and limited flexibility hinder full implementation. However, school leaders demonstrate adaptive strategies to sustain program delivery, reflecting CRL's emphasis on leadership agency within constraints.

The findings reveal that capacity development gaps exist in professional learning, instructional competence, culturally responsive training, and leadership preparation.

Teachers need stronger support in applying varied pedagogical strategies and integrating culturally relevant instruction. Leadership gaps are also evident, particularly in understanding Madrasah content and providing effective instructional guidance. These challenges are intensified by workload pressures, which limit the application of training in practice.

The findings align with research emphasizing that one-time training is insufficient for meaningful instructional improvement. Continuous mentoring, coaching, and collaborative learning are necessary for sustained development [18,19]. In culturally diverse settings, professional development must also be culturally responsive [14,20,12]. Moreover, leadership capacity is essential for effective program implementation [21], especially in inclusive education contexts requiring differentiated instruction and support strategies [15].

From a CRL perspective, these gaps highlight the need for leaders to intentionally develop both their own and teachers' cultural and instructional competencies. While leaders are committed to implementation, limitations in culturally grounded training and mentoring restrict full realization of CRL principles. This underscores the need for professional development that is both technical and transformative, grounded in context and culture.

The findings show that educational leadership limitations are most evident during the initial implementation of MEP. These include challenges in program management, delegation, collaboration, stakeholder coordination, and handling cultural diversity.

From a CRL perspective, these limitations emphasize the importance of leadership that is responsive to cultural diversity and grounded in trust, inclusion, and collaboration. However, the findings also show that without sufficient preparation and systemic support, leaders struggle to fully operationalize these principles. This highlights the need for sustained leadership development and institutional support to strengthen culturally responsive and effective program implementation.

#### **4.1. Implications**

School leaders and education managers should strengthen coordination and planning systems to better support the implementation of the Madrasah Education Program. Clearer role distribution, improved communication channels, and more responsive decision-making structures are needed to reduce workload pressures and scheduling conflicts. Governance should also focus on strengthening collaboration among school heads, coordinators, and teachers to ensure shared responsibility in program implementation.

Teachers need continuous support in applying flexible and culturally responsive teaching strategies to manage diverse learners and integrated curriculum demands. Instructional planning should be more aligned and realistic in terms of time allocation to ensure that both MEP and regular subjects are effectively delivered. Strengthening mentoring, peer

collaboration, and classroom-based support systems can further improve teaching effectiveness and learner engagement.

Education policies should provide clearer and more flexible guidelines for integrating MEP within existing school structures. There is a need to address workload distribution, instructional time allocation, and resource provision to ensure effective implementation. Policies should also prioritize sustained professional development programs and ensure adequate support for culturally responsive and inclusive education practices.

Future studies may explore the long-term impact of MEP implementation on learner outcomes and teacher performance. Further research may also examine how different school contexts influence program effectiveness, particularly in terms of resources, leadership capacity, and institutional support. Additional studies focusing on stakeholder experiences, especially learners and parents, may provide a more comprehensive understanding of program implementation challenges and successes.

---

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that school head in the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in Region practice leadership as a dynamic, context-driven process, characterized by adaptability, collaboration, and cultural responsiveness amid structural constraints. It reveals that effective MEP leadership is not anchored in a fixed model but emerges through continuous adjustment, shared responsibility, and a strong commitment to inclusive and meaningful education for Muslim learners. Overall, the findings affirm that leadership in MEP is both strategic and relational, grounded in real-world challenges yet sustained by purposeful engagement and reflective practice. This study will benefit society by strengthening culturally responsive educational leadership and guiding future policies and practices toward more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable Madrasah education systems.

---

## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgments*

The author sincerely acknowledges Dr. Marilou D. Junsay, Program Chair of the PhD-EM Program, for her guidance and support throughout this research.

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

We, Mae Ann B. Boquel and Marilou D. Junsay, declare that we have no conflicts of interest or competing interests to disclose regarding the publication of this manuscript or any institution, product, or entity mentioned herein. Furthermore, we have no affiliations with, or financial interests in, any products or organizations that could influence the study outcomes presented or compete with those discussed in the manuscript.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

Ethical approval adhered to Belmont Report principles, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, minimized risks, participant protection, and trustworthy procedures throughout the study for all respondents.

### *Statement of informed consent*

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

---

## References

- [1] Guta C, Abulon ELR, David AP. Madrasah Education Program implementation in the Philippines: an exploratory case study. *Int J Comp Educ Dev.* 2021;22(3):201–17. doi:10.1108/IJCED-06-2019-0034.
- [2] Hidayat R, Suryadi D, Mulyana A. Leadership in Islamic education: integrating religious and modern knowledge. *Int J Instr.* 2020;13(4):593–608. doi:10.29333/iji.2020.13437a.
- [3] Leithwood K, Harris A, Hopkins D. Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *Sch Leadersh Manag.* 2020;40(1):5–22. doi:10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077.

- [4] Marasigan AC. Madrasah education in the Philippines: policy, practice, and prospects. *J Muslim Minor Aff.* 2021;41(2):220–35. doi:10.1080/13602004.2021.1905760.
- [5] Park J, Niyozov S. Madrasa education in South Asia and Southeast Asia: current issues and debates. *Asia Pac J Educ.* 2008;28(4):323–51. doi:10.1080/02188790802469067.
- [6] Ahmad I. Instructional leadership challenges in Islamic schools: a global perspective. *J Islam Educ Stud.* 2023;11(2):45–60.
- [7] Ahmad I, Niyozov S. Islamic education and leadership: challenges and transformations in contemporary contexts. *Religions.* 2020;11(8):1–14. doi:10.3390/rel11080392.
- [8] Loni A, Andrabi T. Challenges in Madrasah education: leadership, curriculum, and governance issues. *J Educ Policy Anal.* 2022;30(2):78–95.
- [9] Dilangalen MS, Catoto JL. Implementation challenges of the Madrasah Education Program in the Philippines. *Int J Multidiscip Res Anal.* 2022;5(4):1023–30. doi:10.47191/ijmra/v5-i4-18.
- [10] Kulidtod RC. Madrasah education in the Philippines: issues and challenges. *Asia Pac J Multidiscip Res.* 2017;5(3):45–52.
- [11] Hashim R, Sallehuddin AR. Leadership in Islamic education: issues and challenges. *Int J Islam Thought.* 2018;14:45–56.
- [12] Khalifa MA, Gooden MA, Davis JE. Culturally responsive school leadership: a synthesis of the literature. *Rev Educ Res.* 2016;86(4):1272–311. doi:10.3102/0034654316630383.
- [13] Spillane JP, Reiser BJ, Reimer T. Policy implementation and cognition: reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Rev Educ Res.* 2018;72(3):387–431. doi:10.3102/00346543072003387.
- [14] Gay G. *Culturally responsive teaching: theory, research, and practice.* 3rd ed. New York: Teachers College Press; 2018.
- [15] Florian L, Camedda D. Enhancing teacher education for inclusion. *Eur J Teach Educ.* 2020;43(1):4–8. doi:10.1080/02619768.2020.1707579.
- [16] Hallinger P. Science mapping the knowledge base on educational leadership and management from emerging regions. *Educ Manag Adm Leadersh.* 2020;48(2):209–30.
- [17] Opfer VD, Pedder D. Conceptualizing teacher professional learning: a systems perspective. *Rev Educ Res.* 2021;91(3):376–407. doi:10.3102/00346543211019165.
- [18] Darling-Hammond L, Hyler ME, Gardner M. Effective teacher professional development. *Rev Educ Res.* 2020;90(3):376–407. doi:10.3102/0034654320914840.
- [19] Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual Res Psychol.* 2006;3(2):77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- [20] Lincoln YS, Guba EG. *Naturalistic inquiry.* Newbury Park (CA): Sage Publications; 1985.